

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Do not feed the geese; it's detrimental to their health and to your safety.
- If a nesting goose pair is near your usual building entrance or walking route, temporarily use an alternative entrance or route, if available.
- Do not approach nesting geese and/or geese with goslings to minimize aggressive behaviors towards you.
- Use native vegetation as a landscaping alternative to avoid planting additional grass lawns for future landscaping at the Lab: grass lawn is very attractive to geese!
- Take time to enjoy, watching from a distance, the beauty of both the adult and gosling geese, as well as to observe their interesting bird behaviors.
- Take time to read more about this species at the following website:

Cornell Lab of Ornithology, All About Birds
http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/Canada_Goose_dtl.html



Photo: Canada geese demonstrate their adaptiveness to urban environments, here nesting within a parking lot island at the laboratory.

KEY CONTACTS

Please contact the following LLNL staff for any issues or requests for additional information and educational materials.

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Photo: Canada geese have a high adaptability to urban habitats and tolerant human activity well. A goose family resting in the middle of a main walkway demonstrates both traits.

Geese & You



What You Need to Know

Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory

FEEDING GEESE

Canada geese eat a lot! They spend upwards of 12 hours a day feeding and graze on plant materials that include grass, roots, and leaves.

Many employees enjoy the sight of fuzzy-feathered goslings or appreciate the beauty of adult geese. Often, people enjoy feeding wildlife and erroneously believe that this is beneficial to the animal.

Geese are attracted to food handouts or easy access to human food. This feeding causes major changes in goose behavior as well as more nuisance and safety problems for staff.

Although it's natural to want to feed the geese, please don't. They have plenty of food naturally and the detrimental effects of feeding include:

- Increasing their likelihood of poor health, incidence of disease and deformities due to nutritional deficiencies;
- Habituating the geese to humans and increasing the likelihood of aggressive behavior;
- Making it difficult to successfully use techniques to encourage geese to leave the site;
- Attracting additional geese to the site;
- Aggregating larger groups of geese in one or a few areas of the site (increased geese feces in one area, more nuisance behavior, etc).



ENJOYING GEESE

The Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*) is easily recognized by its distinct white cheek patch that covers its throat and its otherwise black head, bill and neck in contrast with its brownish-colored body. It weighs 3.5 –10 lbs, with males larger than females.

The call of a goose is generally a loud and resonant honk. This familiar call can be heard for miles when geese fly in their V-shaped flock formations. Evidence exists that geese may communicate with each other using as many as 13 different calls. In fact, goslings begin communicating with their parents while still in the egg.

Geese generally mate with the same partner for life. Nest building begins in February or March, followed by breeding and the appearance of new goslings in early spring.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act protects Canada geese and requires a permit for activities involving the geese (e.g., handling nests, eggs, birds). While geese historically migrated, resident populations of geese became established across the U.S. in the last half-century. As a result, both migratory and resident Canada geese may use the lab site.

While Canada geese currently are commonly encountered and abundant, their numbers severely declined prior to the protective measures instituted in the early 1900's. With a dramatic increase in development and lakeside lawns (or grass areas near water), the goose populations further flourished. Geese are highly adaptable to human environments where their needs for water, cover and grazing area are met.



AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

An effective and easy way to enhance the human-geese experience is to increase your tolerance. For some, the aggressive behavior that geese may display during their spring breeding season is intimidating. Yet, it's usually easily resolved. Read on!

- Male geese may become aggressive from the nest building stage until the new goslings grow flight feathers.
- Aggressive behavior includes moving towards you while hissing or spreading out its wings.
- If you encounter an aggressive goose, you can usually resolve it by:
 - Maintain direct eye contact with the goose and face your body directly towards it.
 - Do not squint, close or cover your eyes.
 - Slowly back away while keeping a neutral demeanor (do not show **fear** or hostility).
 - Do not cover, hide your face, turn your back or run from the goose.
 - If a goose flies towards your face, then duck or move away at a 90 degree angle to the direction of flight, still facing the goose.
- Give the geese extra space (between you and them) during their breeding season; this decreases their sense of being threatened and the likelihood of an aggressive display.

